

**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS**

**Children's Home Society
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2003-2004**

Team Members: Chris Sargent, Mary Borgman, Valerie Johnson, Barb Boltjes, Education Specialists

Dates of On Site Visit: October, 7th, 8th, and 9th 2003

Date of Report: October 11, 2002

This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Meets Requirements	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Data sources used:

- Parent surveys
- Referring agency surveys
- File reviews
- Agency comprehensive plan

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Promising practice

The steering committee concluded training topics listed are required as part of our program policies and procedures, the minimum number of hours in each area are not specified. Through J.C. Chambers, a certified trainer in Life Space Crisis Intervention (LSCI), the staff receives forty hours of intense training. Each staff person involved takes a competency-based test following their involvement in the training. Regular follow-up training takes place bi-monthly with Children's Home Society (CHS) trainers.

Additional training opportunities are provided for educational staff in a variety of areas, including IEP Development, methods and strategies to teach handwriting (Handwriting Without Tears), and Autism Spectrum Disorders. Educational staff are also encouraged to participate in professional growth and training opportunities when available, such as those offered through the Council of Exceptional Children and the South Dakota Department of Education.

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded CHS is a private agency and is not required to have child-find efforts in place or for services provided elsewhere for students. A system is in place for assessing all children as they are admitted to the program. CHS does not place children in other private facilities. However, in collaboration with the Local Education Agency (LEA), CHS ensures that special education and related services are administered in accordance with the child's IEP at no cost to parent.

When assessing academic and therapeutic needs, CHS decides where to focus efforts to help children progress in their school and family environments. Staff assesses academic and therapeutic performance quarterly. From that data, decisions are made regarding progress toward overall treatment goals. CHS reviews and analyzes discipline data daily and revises procedures as needed. CHS does not suspend or expel students from its program.

CHS evaluates the needs of the children and identifies areas to be offered as training for staff. The staff receives a minimum of 50 hours per year of training to work with children who are at risk. Individualized training is offered to staff working with children who have special needs.

Validation Results

Promising practice

Based upon classroom observations and interviews with CHS staff, the monitoring team concurred that LSCI training received by the staff of CHS is a promising practice as concluded by the steering committee. Staff feel comfortable with the philosophy of the program and implement it on a regular basis. Continuous follow-up training allows the staff to refresh their skills and resolve difficulties they may have implementing the program. Training opportunities are also available in other programs. They are implementing the Handwriting Without Tears program and continue to receive training in specific areas of need.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for general supervision as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded children are placed at the CHS without charge to parents/guardians. CHS does not suspend or expel students from its program.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded CHS ensures that comprehensive evaluations are conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff and includes input from parents/guardians/surrogates. Functional assessments are completed, but not adequately reported in the present levels of performance. CHS ensures evaluation and reevaluation procedures and instruments meet the minimum requirements. The IEP team considers evaluation findings when determining whether the child meets the criteria for a particular disability category. Re-evaluation and continuing eligibility standards at CHS meet state requirements.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded functional assessments are completed, but not adequately reported in the present levels of performance pages of the IEP according to file reviews.

Parents are given a copy of the team report which identifies the child's disability category. The form used needs revision to reflect all the components required for a learning disability diagnosis.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements for evaluation procedures as concluded by the steering committee.

Needs improvement

The monitoring team agrees with all appropriate evaluation areas identified in need of improvement as concluded by the steering committee.

Through observation, the agency presented a variety of data that would be appropriate to analyze and include as functional assessment information during the evaluation process. This includes data from the Star reading/math program and behavior intervention logs. The agency needs to incorporate this information into the evaluation report. Additional information regarding the link between functional assessment and the present levels of performance can be found under principle five, individual education program.

Other than the child's regular teacher, at least one team member must observe the child's academic performance in the regular classroom setting. Observation information was available in the evaluation reports however, the multidisciplinary team written report required for students suspected of having a learning disability did not include observation information.

Through interview and a review of the agency prior notice/consent form, the team recommends the evaluation areas of behavior and transition be added to the document. Behavior evaluations were identified under the category of Adaptive Behavior. This does not adequately inform parent of all areas for which consent is sought.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Promising practice

The steering committee concluded CHS assigns school buddy/surrogates to ensure the rights of a child are protected if the parent is not available. Potential surrogates go through extensive background checks and specific training to prepare them for their role and involvement with students. CHS also assigns school buddies to children who continue to have involved parents, yet demonstrate a need for a positive role model. School buddies assigned in cases where parental rights have been terminated and potential adoptive families are identified. Typically, students remain involved with their buddies throughout this transitional process.

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded CHS ensures parents are informed of their parental rights under IDEA. The agency ensures parents/guardians/surrogates are informed in their native language or another mode of communication (if necessary) of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought.

CHS provides parents/guardians/surrogates of a child in need of special education and related services with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education. Complaint and due process policies/procedures are established.

Validation Results

Promising practice

The monitoring team agrees the agency school buddy/surrogate program is an area of promising practice. The school buddy/surrogate program involves trained volunteers who protect the children's rights and become actively involved in the children's lives. They go on outings, bake cookies and participate in other activities on a monthly basis. This interaction provides children with positive adult role model other than school staff.

The agency implements a levels program which teaches children to express feelings about the behavior of their peers. The program teaches appropriate communication skills such as, eye contact, appropriate listening and positive feedback. In one classroom observed, the levels program has empowered a student to design a program to assist the class as a whole, to improve their behavior.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirement under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

Out of compliance

24:05:30:17. Consent. "Consent" means that the parents have been fully informed in the native language or another mode of communication of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought in the native language or another mode of communication; the parents understand and agree in writing to the carrying out of the activity for which consent is sought; the consent describes that activity and lists any records which will be released and to whom; and the granting of consent by the parents is voluntary and may be revoked in writing at any time.

24:05:13:01. Definitions

"Parent," a natural or adoptive parent, a guardian, a person acting in the place of a parent such as a grandparent or stepparent with whom the child lives, a person who is legally responsible for the child's welfare, or a surrogate parent who has been appointed in accordance with this article, but not the state if the child is a ward of the state.

Through a review of 4 student records, the monitoring team found prior notice/consent for evaluation was signed by individuals from the Department of Social Services. An employee of the state may not act in the role of the parent for the provision of educational consent.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Meets requirements

The steering committee concluded IEP teams are comprised of appropriate team membership and meet all team responsibilities. Written notice is provided for all IEP meetings and the revised written notice form will include all required content.

Needs improvement

The steering committee concluded information on the present levels of performance do not adequately document parent input or how the student's disability affects involvement and progress in the general curriculum (school-age) or appropriate activities (preschool). CHS does not serve children over the age of 13. Transition procedures need to be addressed for those students approaching age 14 when necessary.

Validation Results

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements as concluded by the steering committee.

Out of compliance

24:05:27:01:03 Content of individualized education program

A student's IEP must contain present levels of performance based upon the skill areas affected by the students identified disability. The present levels of performance are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process. In 18 of 19 files reviewed, functional assessment data was not present in the evaluation reports, therefore, no link to evaluation was seen. Parent input was not documented in 6 files reviewed. 10 of 15 files reviewed did not state how the disability of the student affected their involvement and progress in the general curriculum.

For each student beginning at age 14, or younger if necessary, the IEP must include a statement of the transition service needs of the student that focuses on the student's course of study. A coordinated set of activities shall be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests. Through interview and file review the monitoring team found student transition needs and services are not addressed in CHS policy and procedure. Transition service needs are not considered for students younger than age 14.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific

areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Meets requirements

All CHS students are served in the least restrictive environment with the supports necessary for successful participation.

Validation Results

Positive Practice

In Rockerville, the Lakota language is taught in each classroom weekly. With younger students, the instructor uses the drum and sings with the children learning Lakota. The instructor is a Native American elder from the surrounding community. He uses the overhead projector to practice words in English and then practice the Lakota matching word. The children practice nouns, verbs, numbers, phrases and sentences. The instructor says a word and the students repeat it. Next the students are asked to read the English word and then the Lakota word. The students enjoyed the instruction and were very fluent with most of the information presented.

Meets requirements

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirement for least restrictive requirements as concluded by the steering committee